



FUNDERS' COMMITTEE FOR CIVIC PARTICIPATION

PEOPLE | PHILANTHROPY | POWER

FUNDERS' CENSUS INITIATIVE (FCI): A TEN-YEAR BLUEPRINT FOR CENSUS PHILANTHROPIC ENGAGEMENT

Updated Summer 2023

INTRODUCTION

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 is critical to ensure Census Bureau policies and operations center the insights and lived experiences of historically undercounted communities toward the shared goal of a more accurate count. National, state, and community foundations, donors, collaboratives, philanthropy serving organizations, and other philanthropic institutions have a role to play in this work. This Blueprint is a resource for the sector that includes Census Bureau milestones and concrete examples of how philanthropy can convene, educate, advocate, and invest in census work on the road to Census 2030 and a more equitable democracy.

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 national partners like the Census Equity Initiative (CEI), Leadership Conference on Civil & Human Rights, and United Philanthropy Forum.

Please contact FCCP Special Projects Director **Jocelyn Bissonnette** with questions about this resource or to get involved: jbissonnette@funderscommittee.org.

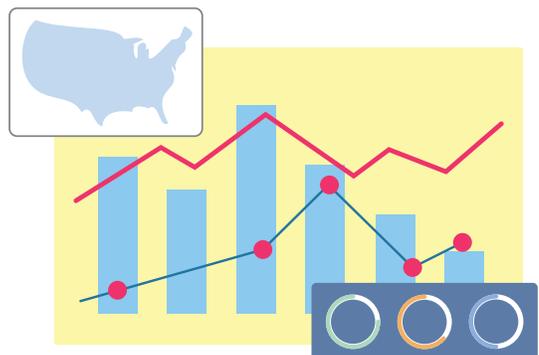
THROUGHOUT THE DECADE:

CENSUS MILESTONES

- American Community Survey (ACS) implementation, content development, and data releases (continuous).
- Annual administration budget request, and congressional consideration and approval of funding, for the decennial census, ACS, and other Census Bureau programs.

FUNDER ACTIONS

- 2020 Census activity is ongoing through 2023, including data releases, challenge programs, and evaluation reports. And while 2030 Census policies, content, and operations won't be finalized for a while, significant work on the next decennial census 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 FCCP, CEI, and Census Counts) to understand the latest policy and operational development and strategize with funders and practitioners.
- 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. This could include programming and grantmaking to support ACS educational efforts.
- Maintain relationships throughout the decade with:
 - **Funders, 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, ending 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 and the role it can play in supporting the Bureau's work, as well as deepen the local knowledge and cultural competencies of its 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).¹
- 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. 2021 - 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 (CQR) challenges.

¹By law, the Census Bureau releases apportionment counts and results by December 31 of the census year. However, pandemic-related delays in virtually all 2020 Census operations delayed release of the apportionment data.

2022

CENSUS MILESTONES

- 1950 Census forms available through the National Archives.
- Results from the Post-Enumeration Survey (PES), which measures census accuracy, identified net undercounts at the national level among most historically undercounted populations and households.
- CQR (January 2022 - June 2023) and Post-Census Group Quarters Review appeals programs (June 6, 2022 - June 30, 2023).
- 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 and census data, such as the design of the 2030 Census, data collection on race/ethnicity and sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI), 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.
- Determine whether to support, through grantmaking, any local government submissions for the one-time (new) Post-Census Group Quarters Review program.

LOOKING FORWARD 2023–2024

CENSUS MILESTONES

- Research and testing to inform 2030 Census design selection and operational development.
- Implementation of the first Census Barriers, Attitudes, and Motivators Survey (CBAMS) of the decade, which helps inform the broad census communications campaign.
- *Federal Register* Notices seeking public input on the American Community Survey and OMB's race and ethnicity data 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 (DHC) files, with additional data collected in the 2020 Census for various levels of geography, including age, sex, household/family relationships, and housing tenure (May 25, 2023) and the first sets of detailed data for racial and ethnic subgroups (September 2023).
- Population Estimates Challenge Program restarts, allowing local and tribal governments to appeal their annual estimates starting with the Vintage 2022 population estimates released in 2023.
- OMB federal race and ethnicity data standards revision completed (summer 2024, tentatively).
- Cognitive testing of SOGI questions on the ACS in 2023, followed by field testing (scope TBD) in 2024 after issuance of a *Federal Register* Notice seeking public comment on the testing plan.

FUNDER ACTIONS

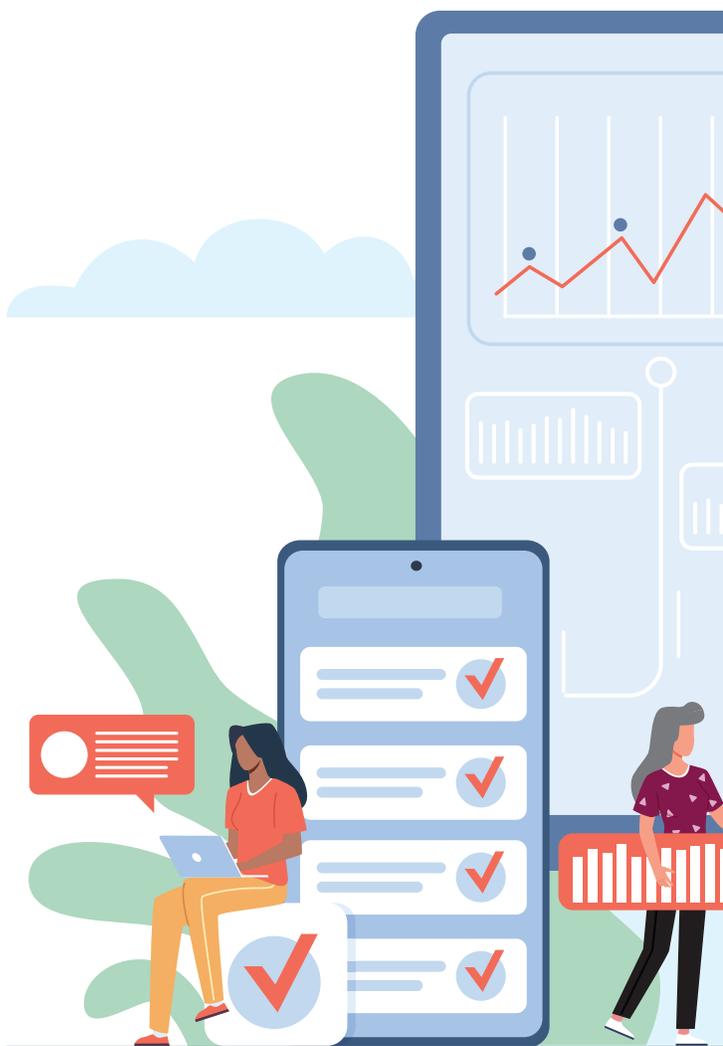
- Sustain grants to organizations conducting education on the ACS and advocating for prudent policy and operational decisions that will affect the accuracy of the ACS and 2030 Census—both for early census campaign development and real-time outreach and promotion campaigns. Organizations must be resourced 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.
- Consider multi-year grants to state and local practitioners to create and maintain diverse coalitions of stakeholders and data users to conduct public education on the importance of the ACS and to join national organizations in advocating for a robust ACS sample and improved methodologies to ensure reliable data, especially for less populous areas and smaller population groups.
- 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, use of administrative records, etc.), and questionnaire development (e.g., citizenship question, improvement of the race/ethnicity questions, consideration of SOGI questions, etc.).
- Continue to fund organizations focused on improving the race/ethnicity questions and adding SOGI questions, to support their engagement with the Census Bureau and OMB, as well as educational activities for stakeholders at the national, state, and local levels.
- Begin developing internal strategies to provide resources to practitioners and partner with other key stakeholders, such as local and Tribal governments, through the critical final planning phase years.

CENSUS MILESTONES

- Begin final planning phase for the 2030 Census (through 2027).
- Testing to support key decisions affecting 2030 Census design and operations, including questionnaire content and question wording, possible revisions to the Residence Criteria and Situations (“residence rules”), and new design features (2025-2027).
- Continue to refine the 2030 Census operational plan based on test results and challenges.
- Continue testing and partner consultations to implement any revisions to the OMB race and ethnicity data standards effectively.

FUNDER ACTIONS

- Increase engagement at your institution:
 - Identify staff person/s dedicated to census issues.
 - Continue to identify grantees, both for early census campaign development and real-time outreach and promotion campaigns.
 - Plan for your institution to become an official 2030 Census “Partner”.
 - 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, complete count committees, 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 (GOTC) campaigns in historically undercounted communities.
 - Begin outreach to state, local, and Tribal governments about their plans to participate in the LUCA program and engage local nonprofits in the effort to help ensure an accurate address list (2025); make planning grants to nonprofits that can assist in the LUCA effort (within legal boundaries) (early 2026).
 - Begin outreach to state, local, and Tribal governments to encourage creation of complete count committees no later than early 2027, with planning for effective committees occurring in 2025-2026.
 - Make grants to national and regional PSOs to support funders in their engagement around the census.



(2025 – 2026 Funder Actions, continued)

- Increase engagement with philanthropic and other partners;
 - Initiate or join census funder collaboratives, including at the state level; 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 and health care institutions, as well as state, local, and Tribal governments.
- Begin outreach to state legislators and executive branch officials to encourage state investment in GOTC campaigns and other promotional efforts to boost census participation in the state; explore funding models from the 2020 Census that relied on joint state-philanthropy approaches.

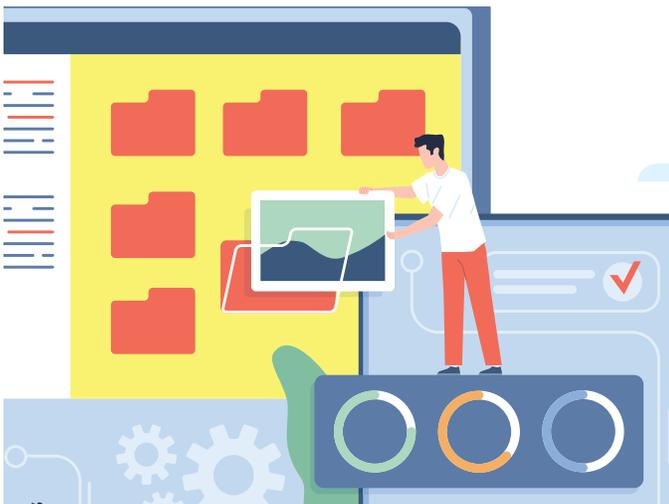
2027

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 (2027-2029).

FUNDER ACTIONS

- Increase engagement at your institution, grantmaking, and with philanthropic and other partners (see details from 2024-2026).
- In partnership with FCI and other funder collaboratives/PSOs, organize a broad community of funders to convene and develop an investment strategy around 2030 Census preparations and implementation, including participation in LUCA and creation of complete count committees.
- Make multi-year grants to local complete count committees that lack sufficient resources to implement and sustain robust GOTC activities at the county or municipal level.
- Start or join a statewide and/or local Complete Count Committee to ensure philanthropy is represented.



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).
- Regional Census Centers open. (There were six for the 2020 Census).
- 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, complete count committees, 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.).



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 planning 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, information, 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 (early 2029).



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 as counting operations wind down.
- 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

FUNDER ACTIONS See 2021 for tentative Census Milestones and Funder Actions.

