



Together We Count

Assessing Efforts to Support a
Fair and Accurate 2020 Census



BARSOUM POLICY
CONSULTING

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Summary of Findings

OVERARCHING FINDINGS

- At the highest level, we think the overall approach to working towards a fair and accurate census was sound and effective. While there are always lessons to learn and tweaks that could have been made, the ethos and approaches taken resulted in a strong response in a particularly challenging time.
- The overall strategy of building and supporting a diverse network of stakeholders over time allowed for broad mobilization, effective exchange and adaptation, a network effect beyond those directly involved, and combinations of capacities toward the shared goal of a quality census.
- The ability to embrace an emergent approach and lean into adaptation and responsive pivoting served the strategy well.

NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

STATE / LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE

POLICY IMPROVEMENTS

FUNDER ENGAGEMENT

- A network of national hub organizations was formed around the 2020 Census, which helped them leverage each other's expertise, skills, and resources in support of the census and ultimately helped them to respond and adapt to emerging challenges.
- The hub network effectively connected national, state, and local organizations on the census and to a range of critical census resources that supported their GOTC work. The two-way relationships between national hubs and their affiliates allowed these organizations to mutually inform each other's census work and rapidly respond and modify strategies.
- The pandemic forced an increased reliance on technology and social media strategies among the hub network, which resulted in increased social media capacity and innovation with affiliates on the ground. It also led to greater use of local media, ad and mail campaigns, and distribution of materials.
- The citizenship question and the social uprisings in response to the George Floyd murder created challenges for the census but were also opportunities for power building for some national hubs and their constituencies.
- The Census Counts Campaign played a critical role as the hub of hubs but also as an overarching campaign lead that centralized resources and information and enabled rapid response.
- The availability of centralized research, analysis, and technical expert support informed and strengthened census activities throughout all phases of the census.

NATIONAL
INFRASTRUCTURE

STATE / LOCAL
INFRASTRUCTURE

POLICY
IMPROVEMENTS

FUNDER
ENGAGEMENT

- Most CEF grantees both leveraged and built the expertise and skills needed to conduct their GOTC work and CEF funding helped them deepen and broaden their outreach work.
- CEF grantees connected to the national census infrastructure through their partnerships with national hubs and used the resources the Collaborative provided; Census Count Campaign resources and the CUNY map were the most helpful supports for their GOTC work.
- CEF grantees worked with a diverse group of partners on the ground. They worked most closely with Complete Count Committees, community and base-building organizations, and trusted messengers.
- The CEF grantmaking process was responsive to emerging census needs and targeted funding where it was most needed.

NATIONAL
INFRASTRUCTURE

STATE / LOCAL
INFRASTRUCTURE

POLICY
IMPROVEMENTS

FUNDER
ENGAGEMENT

- A core group of national organizations led the census advocacy; their existing relationships, coalitions, and tables formed the basis of their collaboration and contributed to their success.
- Reaching across the aisle to Republican legislative leaders and working with the business sector were important to the success of the advocacy strategy.
- Inside–outside strategies were made possible because of the presence of both a core groups of census experts and advocates and the networks of state and local organizations that could be mobilized to demonstrate power and influence.
- The 2020 Census increased advocacy capacity and the base of support for the census that will be used now and into the future.

NATIONAL
INFRASTRUCTURE

STATE / LOCAL
INFRASTRUCTURE

POLICY
IMPROVEMENTS

FUNDER
ENGAGEMENT

- The Collaborative enabled and facilitated funders’ engagement and successfully expanded the number of funders and the resources raised to support the 2020 Census; FCI played a key role in enabling funder participation.

- In addition to providing funding, funders leveraged their influence to support the census.
- The Collaborative facilitated and enabled funder engagement by designing different ways to participate and providing on-going support to build census-specific knowledge and skills.
- There is energy and interest for continued funder engagement, and funders’ interests related to the 2030 Census require very early, if not on-going engagement.

LEGACY / POST-GOTC

- The 2020 Census was more than a campaign; it was a catalyst for understanding the foundational role of the census in democracy and power for historically undercounted populations. This awareness fuels the commitment of organization to continue working on census and related efforts.
- Data suggest that the partnerships created by national, state, and local organizations were not merely transactional for the purposes of improving the 2020 Census count, but rather the infrastructure developed was expected to have a life for other kinds of civic engagement efforts and has implications for the sustainability of a longer-term infrastructure.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

This report is organized into three main sections:

<i>Section</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>What to Expect</i>
Background Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About the 2020 Census Collaborative • About this Evaluation 	Rich description about the initiative, its history, and progression over time, as well as information about what to expect from the evaluation.
Evaluation Findings by Area of Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Infrastructure • State and Local Infrastructure • Digital Support for GOTC • Policy Improvements • Funder Engagement in the 2020 Census • Cross-Cutting Findings 	Evaluative assessments by ORS Impact and Barsoum Consulting on the outcomes and lessons learned gleaned from across data sources.
Concluding Thoughts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluator Reflections • Conclusion 	Considerations for future thinking and efforts.