Community ConnectLabs

Ensure a Complete and Accurate 2020 Census

Toolkit for Local Complete Count Efforts

Introduction

Local governments, funders, and nonprofits will play a critical role in ensuring a complete and accurate count of hard-to-count communities in the 2020 Census.

Budget cuts and changes made to the 2020 Census will directly affect representation in Congress and electoral college votes, compliance with federal civil rights laws, and the annual federal distribution of $700 billion to states, cities, and vital human services programs from 2020 to 2030.

About CensusOutreach

CensusOutreach is a project of CommunityConnect Labs. We enable government and nonprofit service providers to use mobile messaging to connect with hard-to-reach populations such as low-income and immigrant communities.

CommunityConnect Labs is the leading provider of training and technology solutions for trusted messenger organizations and local Complete Count efforts. Our tools help government and nonprofits to more effectively conduct local outreach (canvassing, volunteer recruitment, enumerator recruitment, education, and FAQ assistance) for the 2020 Census.

Our mission is to enable hard-to-count people to be counted accurately in the 2020 Census.

You can contact us at info@CensusOutreach.org

Toolkit Purpose

The purpose of this toolkit is to provide outreach strategies and tools for local governments and nonprofits to reach hard-to-count people and improve their response rate for the 2020 Census.

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Strategies for Reaching Hard-to-Count Populations

Which populations are historically hard to count?

The Census has historically undercounted certain population subgroups, and these undercounts can have widespread impacts on federal funding and political representation. Local governments and nonprofits have it in their best interests to invest in ensuring their communities are counted.

The following groups have been historically undercounted at disproportionately high rates compared to other groups:

Known Hard-to-Count Groups	Barriers to Being Counted
Children under 5 years old	Lack of awareness and education about Census, who counts, and how the information is used
Racial and ethnic minorities	
Non-English speakers	Language access
Immigrants	Mistrust in government
Persons experiencing homelessness	Technology access for computers and/or reliable Internet
Renters and residents who move often	
Alternative or overcrowded housing units	Privacy/cybersecurity concerns
Gated communities and publicly inaccessible multifamily units	Physical barriers (e.g., no mailbox)
Persons displaced by natural disasters	Misinformation campaigns
Young mobile adults	
Single parent-headed households	

What can be done to reach specific hard-to-count communities?

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to ensuring a complete and accurate count. Each region has a different set of assets and challenges, and so each Complete Count effort will look different.

However, while tactical details will vary, each local Census outreach strategy — whether led by a county, city, foundation, local nonprofit, or a Complete Count Committee — should include the following elements, though they are not without their unique challenges:

Establish a local network of multilingual in-person and virtual "assistance centers"

In 2010, the Census Bureau established a vast network of Census Assistance Centers to serve as in-person locations for people to receive help completing their Census forms. However, due to budget cuts, Census will not be operating these centers in 2020.

Given the majority of the U.S. population will be invited to complete the 2020 Census online, populations on the wrong side of the digital divide (lacking technology and/or Internet access) will be at risk for an undercount.

It will be upon local counties, cities, and nonprofits to create a network of resource locations in their communities to support individuals who need help completing their Census forms in person. These assistance centers should have services available in multiple languages.

Furthermore, given the many changes to the 2020 Census (with its online format, updates to the race/ethnicity questions, and potential addition of the citizenship question), people will be looking to local trusted messengers — not the Census Bureau — to answer questions. County agencies and local nonprofits are already experiencing an uptick in calls and information requests in multiple languages regarding the 2020 Census, and that volume is projected to significantly increase.

Problem

Census deployed a "kiosk" system for the 2018 end-to-end test in Rhode Island. Thirty Census portals were stationed across 33 of the post offices in Providence County, R.I. After the four-month test, these kiosks brought in a total of 111 Census responses distributed across 27 post office locations. Increasing utilization of kiosks requires awareness and engagement campaigns.

Full report **here**[1].

Solution

Establish a centralized look-up system for people to be able to ask questions and be directed to their nearest assistance center based on location and language. Advertise a local phone number for people text into in multiple languages. See "HelpDesk" for more details.

[1] 2018 End-to-End Census Test Update, U.S. Census Bureau

Create a coordinated, consistent, multilingual marketing campaign

While the Census is a form of participatory democracy, it is quite different from elections. It is much more to ask people to provide information about themselves to the government than for people to turn out to vote. Given the lack of awareness and the environment of fear and uncertainty around Census data, counties, cities, and trusted nonprofits will need to be on the front lines of convincing their communities to participate in the Census.

This will be a significant effort involving multiple organizations. Ensuring communities are not confused by potentially conflicting or inaccurate messages from multiple sources will be key. And like for other participatory democracy campaigns, lots of follow-up will be required to sustain the engagement and activation of hard-to-count communities.

This outreach from trusted messengers must be conducted in local languages spoken by hard-to-count communities. For communities in California, that can mean conducting outreach in more than 200 non-English languages.

Problem

Text messages are the No. 1 requested means of follow-up from hard-to-count communities regarding the Census. Many advocacy and civic engagement groups engage in peer-to-peer (P2P) texting strategies during elections. However, messages around something as potentially obscure and fraught (for certain populations) as the Census need to come from trusted messengers, so that at no point the recipient is wondering who is texting them and how they got their phone number.

Solution

Have trusted messenger organizations send tailored follow-up and reminder messages to their communities sourced from a library of consistent, curated content templates available in multiple languages. These message campaigns are timed and automated to send encouraging and informational messages tailored to specific hard-to-count communities. See "Community Motivator" for more details.

Mobile Messaging Tools to Amplify and Scale Outreach Efforts

Why consider employing mobile messaging tools?

There are proven tactics from previous Census outreach efforts that can be replicated for 2020, but local leaders face an unprecedented set of challenges that will require more than just a repeat of ideas that worked a decade ago.

For each of the strategies outlined above, there needs to be a lean, scalable means for implementation. Local resources are least effective when no one knows how to access them. Boots-on-the-ground outreach is only as good as its level of organization.

The Census Bureau conducted focus groups with the hardest-to-count communities and determined that text message reminders are the No. 1 preferred follow-up method for these populations.

The mobile messaging tools presented on the next page are not meant to serve as a singular solution to all Census outreach challenges, but will strengthen and amplify the strategies formed by local government and nonprofit leaders in their Complete Count efforts.

CommunityConnect Labs designed and built these solutions in the spirit of scalability (doing more with less), reaching the last mile (thinking about those with the least time, resources, trust, access, etc.), and amplifying rather than replacing valuable in-person interactions. These tools are made to be accessed on basic phones and in multiple languages.

Mapping our tools to outreach strategies

Strategy	Tool	Implementation Partners	Timeline
Establish a local network of in-person and virtual "assistance centers"	HelpDesk	Organizations that interact with large volumes of HTC individuals and have space, technology, and volunteers/staff to use: ▶ Libraries ▶ Job training centers ▶ Schools, colleges, adult education programs ▶ County social service agencies ▶ Nonprofit service providers Other community centers	Nov 2019 – Jul 2020
Create a coordinated, consistent marketing campaign	Community Motivator	Nonprofit and government organizations with a well-known, trusted brand among diverse communities	Sep 2019 – July 2020

What would implementation look like?

CCL provides full-service implementation, training, and data monitoring to ensure an as successful as possible campaign. A dedicated point of contact would work with you to ensure the technical infrastructure is set up, staff are trained to log in and access the data, and that issues are troubleshooted as soon as they come up.

What data and tracking could be provided to county/nonprofit partners?

CommunityConnect Labs' software can provide dynamic live data available on a dashboard, in a downloadable CSV file, and via API. Examples of data points include:

▶ Number of people signed up to receive "nudge" follow-ups to complete the Census (via Community Motivator tool)

▶ Number of people who have been referred to Census questionnaire assistance events or activities (via HelpDesk tool)

▶ Number of people who have opted in to receive information about Census jobs, how many people have started their application, what are the languages these candidates speak (via Field Staff Recruiter tool)

▶ Number of people whose Census questions were answered (via HelpDesk tool)

▶ Demographics of the users in the abovementioned activities, including ZIP code and language preference (all tools)

How are these tools priced?

CCL's pricing for counties and cities is standard and based on population of the local area. We are well-versed in the government contracting process and can provide sole source justifications as well as work around RFP thresholds, as requested. Certain tools can be offered at a discount; requests for packaging our solutions are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Pricing for nonprofits is determined using a different methodology.

If you need more information, please contact us for a detailed quote and sample proposal at www.censusoutreach.org/contact.

How Do CommunityConnect Labs' Census Outreach Solutions Work?
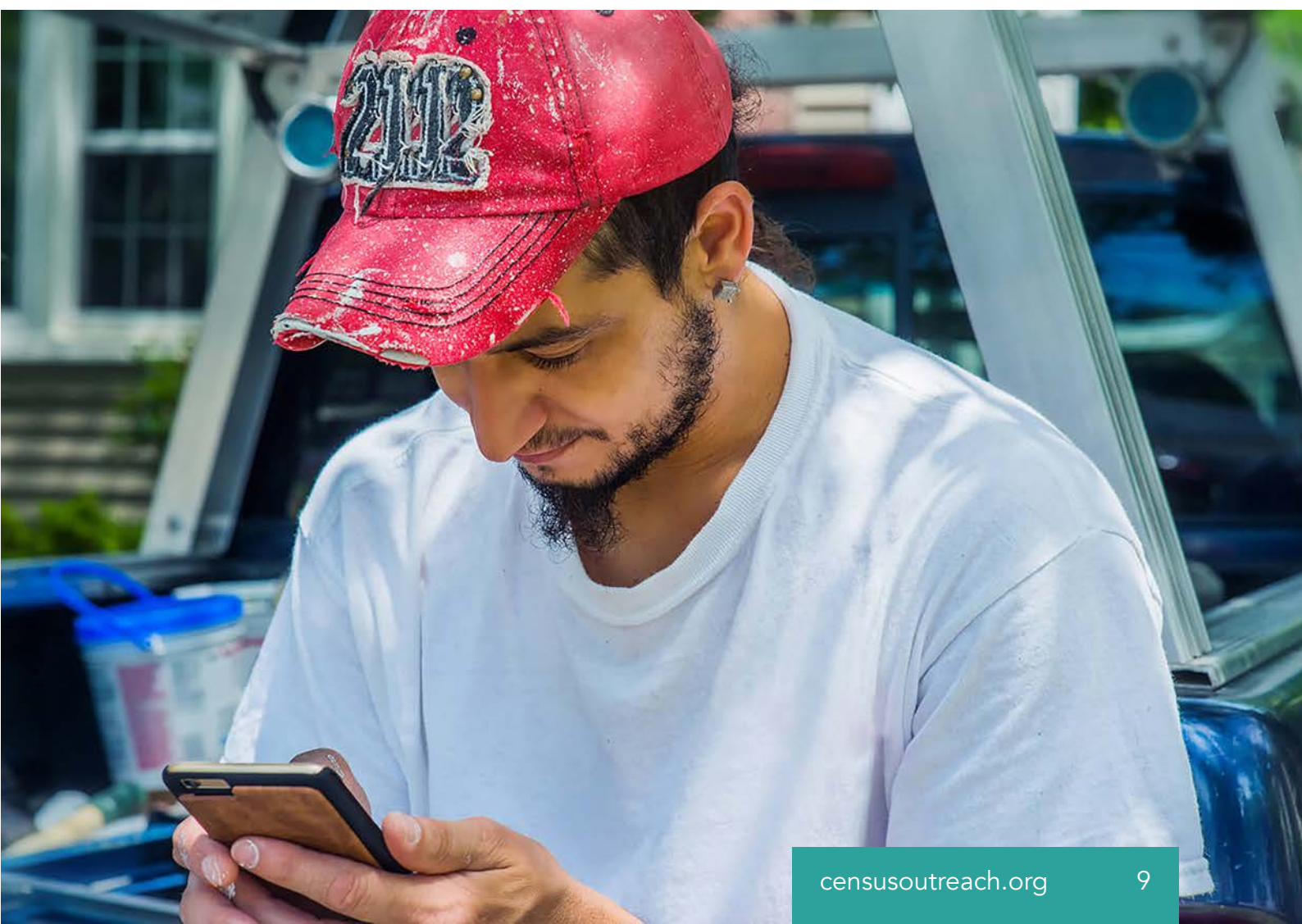
Answer Residents' Census Questions: HelpDesk

24/7 Q&A with a virtual assistant

Problem

Hard-to-count communities are likely to have questions about the Census or need help to fill it out. City, county, and library staff, as well as nonprofit staff, will be burdened by the many questions about the Census. Staff may not have sufficient training to answer questions about the Census.

Solution

- ☑ Quickly and confidentially answers your residents' questions anytime, even on weekends

- ☑ Accessible for your hard-to-count communities' multiple languages: English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, and more

- ☑ Easily add this chatbot to your city, county, or library websites

- ☑ Easily add this chatbot to your internal website — as a reference for your staff to use

- ☑ **For Administrators**: Through the admin dashboard, see live questions asked by local residents

- ☑ **Optional**: If local in-person help is available, The HelpDesk can direct people to nearest in-person assistance based on location & language needs
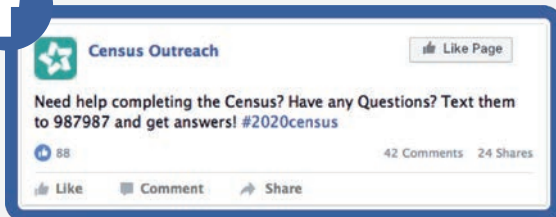
How It Works
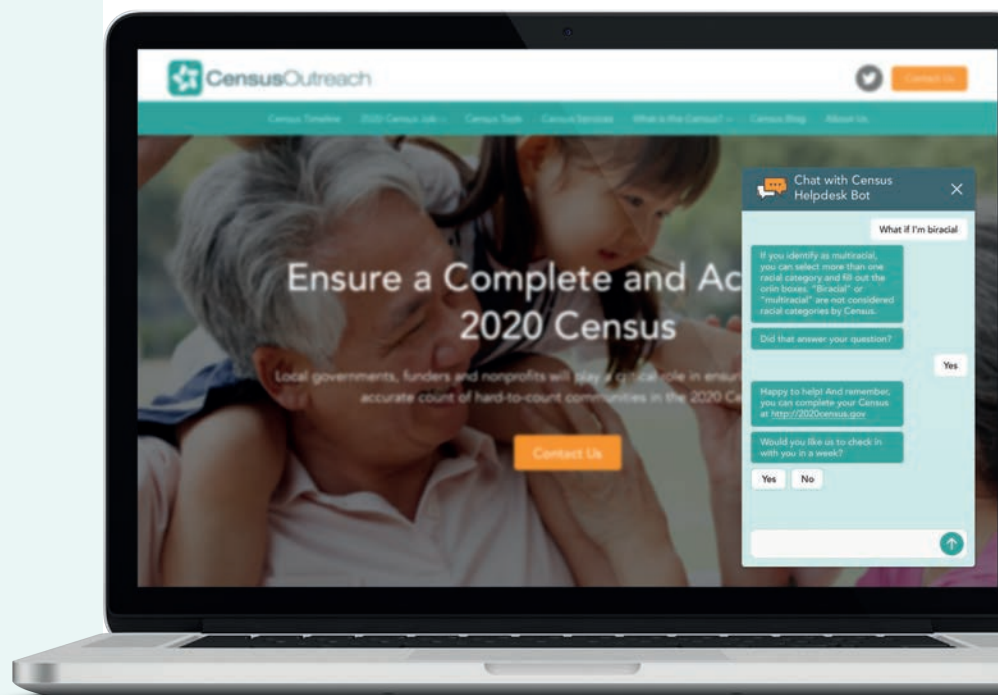
▶ Website option

1. Your webmaster can add the chatbot to your city, county, library, or nonprofit website

2. Users simply type their question and the chatbot will automatically answer their question

How It Works

▶ Text message option:

1 Promote the text-in via social media, flyers, ads

2 Users text the provided number and the chatbot will automatically answer their question

Census Outreach   Like Page

Need help completing the Census? Have any Questions? Text them to 987987 and get answers! #2020census

88   42 Comments   24 Shares

Like   Comment   Share

Census Outreach @CensusOutreach ·
The Census will be happening this month! Check your mailboxes for the survey. Have questions about the Census? Text your question to 987987. #2020census

34   48   ...
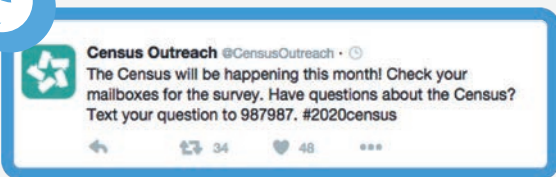
Need Help Completing the Census? Have Any Questions?

Ensure That Your Community Gets the Funding It Deserves For the Next Decade

Text Your Questions to
XXX-XXX-XXXX
and get them answered

When is the Census?

Thanks for reaching out to [ORG]!

Census Day is officially April 1, 2020. You can participate online, over the phone, by mail, or in person between March and July.

Did I answer your question?
Reply
Y for Yes
N for No

Y

Thanks. You can text questions anytime to this number for more answers from [ORG].

Build Your Opt-In List: Community Motivator

Automate Follow-Ups to Motivate and Activate Hard-to-Count Individuals

Problem

Hard-to-count communities need several follow-ups, encouragement, and reminders to motivate them to participate in the Census.

Solution

Easily build your opt-in list and automatically follow up with reminders and nudges

Benefits

☑ Pledge to Be Counted — easily get opt-ins

TEXT PLEDGE TO 987987

In 2020, I will be counted in the Census because my community deserves political representation

× *Mayra*

★ CensusOutreach
www.censusoutreach.org

☑ People will receive a personalized, digital Pledge Card

☑ Automates follow-up: Sends nudges and reminders in 2020 to fill out the Census

☑ Available in multiple languages: English, Spanish, and more

☑ Social sharing: built-in invite to friends

☑ Easily track opt-ins and engagement

How It Works

1. Easily promote "Pledge to be Counted" on your social media, at events, on your website, or on flyers

2. People opt in via text message

3. People will instantly receive a personalized digital Pledge Card and be encouraged to share it on social media and via text

4. People will receive automated reminders and nudges to complete the Census in 2020

5. Admin can download list of opt-ins
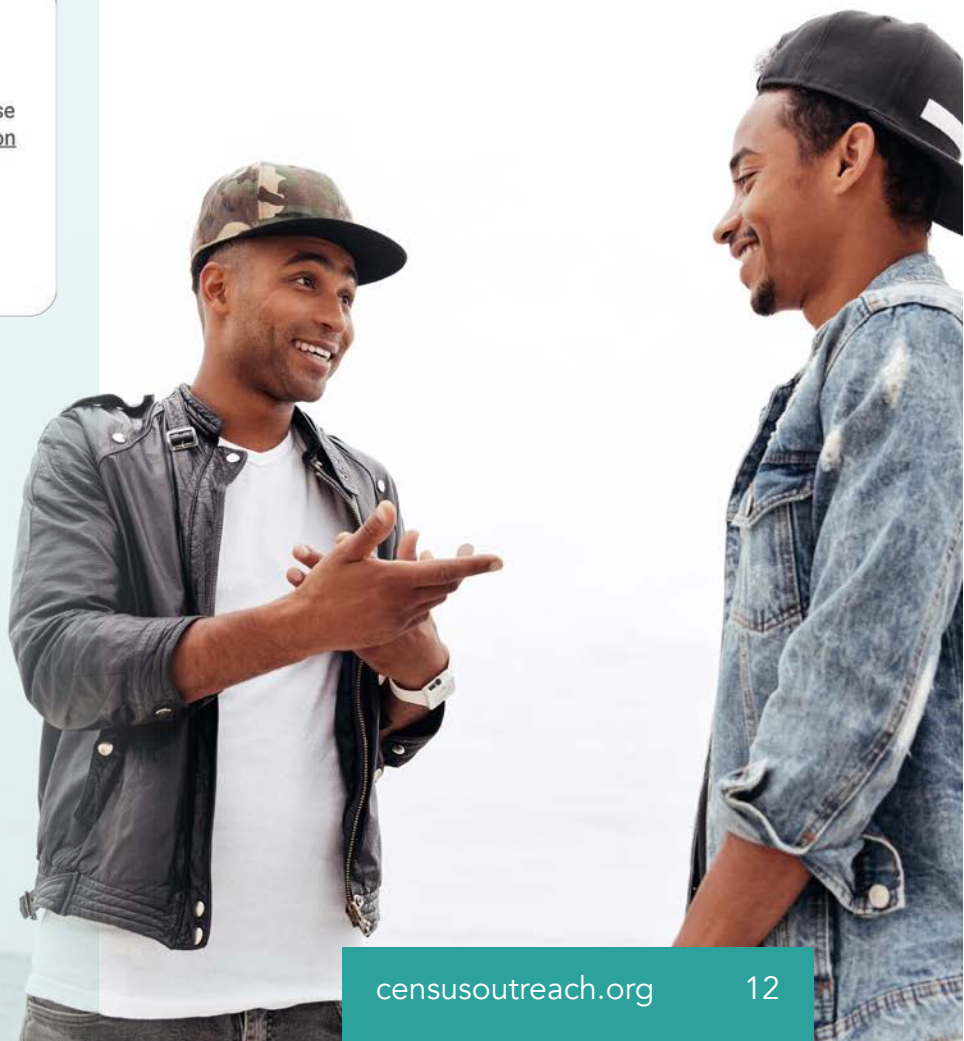
Promote Opt-Ins via Social Media, Flyers, Events

If you want to know more about our products, features, or pricing,

contact us at **info@CensusOutreach.org**